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The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Identical letters dated 6 March 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Guinea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith, in my capacity as Chair of the Group of Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, a letter regarding the attempt of the "Israeli Knesset" to enact laws aiming at imposing Israeli sovereignty over the holy mosque of Al-Aqsa (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 35, 36 and 52, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mamadi **Touré**
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

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Annex to the identical letters dated 6 March 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Guinea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

In my capacity as Chair of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Group in New York, I wish to draw your urgent attention to the very serious matter of Israeli provocations and violations in Occupied East Jerusalem, particularly at Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which houses the holy mosque of Al-Aqsa, and to convey the Group's grave concerns in this regard.

In the recent period, Israeli extremists, among them Government officials, have escalated their incitement regarding Al-Haram Al-Sharif and repeatedly breached the sanctity of the compound, including through the violent storming of the compound by occupying forces, heightening tensions and stirring religious sentiments. Moreover, members of the Israeli parliament recently introduced provocative legislation to assert "sovereignty" over Al-Haram Al-Sharif, with the aim of creating a fait accompli at the compound and further entrenching Israel's unlawful annexation of the city, which remains unrecognized by the international community and has been deemed null and void by the Security Council, as reaffirmed in its relevant resolutions.

OIC, with its 57 Member States, condemns all such acts of aggression and incitement, which constitute a direct provocation of Muslims worldwide, a flagrant violation of relevant United Nations resolutions and international covenants, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, and an affront to the international community's repeated calls for a cessation of illegal Israeli policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Moreover, OIC firmly rejects all attempts and illegal measures by Israel to erase the Palestinian, Arab and Muslim identity, history and presence in the land, particularly in the holy city of Jerusalem.

In this regard, OIC reiterates its support for Jordan in preserving and administering the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, including Al-Haram Al-Sharif, and for the Hashemite historic custodianship of the sites as exercised by His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein. Moreover, it must be reaffirmed that Israel's status in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, of which East Jerusalem is an integral and inseparable part, remains that of an occupying Power. We recall that the acquisition of territory by force is strictly prohibited by international law and Israel's prolonged military occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, is illegal, characterized by systematic, grave breaches of international law, including deliberate acts of colonization. As such, any Israeli attempts to impose sovereignty over the compound of the Al-Aqsa mosque, to alter the demographic composition, character and legal status of Occupied East Jerusalem, and all other provocations and aggressions against Muslim and Christian holy sites, including by means of excavations, are unlawful and must be completely halted. The continuation of Israeli violations will only further destabilize the situation and deepen the suffering of the Palestinian people, as well as undermine the current peace negotiations, and thus risks thwarting the small chance for peace that is before us, with dire consequences.

OIC reaffirms its support for the serious efforts being exerted to reach a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the core of the Middle East

conflict, and believes that all efforts must be made to compel Israel to immediately cease its violations. The international community must firmly demand that Israel, the occupying Power, abide by its obligations in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention, the Hague Regulations of 1907 and the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of 1954 and all relevant United Nations resolutions. This is imperative to stem the deterioration of the situation and to save the prospects for realizing peace on the basis of the two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative.

If Israel persists with its violations, it must be held accountable and bear full responsibility for the repercussions of its violations. In this regard, OIC stresses that the sanctity of the holy mosque of Al-Aqsa and the status of the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif constitute red lines, and that continued provocations and violations threaten not only to sabotage the peace process, but could also endanger regional and global stability.

This critical matter is a litmus test for our collective resolve to help restore confidence in the negotiations process and achieve the goal of Palestinian-Israeli peace. The international community, particularly the Security Council and the members of the Quartet, must compel Israel, the occupying Power, to cease all of its illegal, provocative actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. All efforts must be made to ensure calm and respect for the sanctity of holy places, including Al-Haram Al-Sharif, and to advance the peace process towards the conclusion of a just, lasting and comprehensive Palestinian-Israeli peace whereby the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the inalienable rights and legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people will be finally realized. Thus, the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif can become the capital of peace, tolerance and coexistence.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 35, 36 and 52, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mamadi **Touré**
Ambassador, Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Guinea
to the United Nations
Chair of the Organization
of the Islamic Cooperation Group in New York